



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/705,407	11/10/2003	Satoshi Mizutani	20050/0200481-US0	4396
7278	7590	01/26/2006	EXAMINER	
DARBY & DARBY P.C. P. O. BOX 5257 NEW YORK, NY 10150-5257			STEPHENS, JACQUELINE F	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3761	
DATE MAILED: 01/26/2006				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/705,407

Applicant(s)

MIZUTANI ET AL.

Examiner

Jacqueline F. Stephens

Art Unit

3761

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 07 November 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-12 and 14-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-12 and 14-20 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Allowable Subject Matter

1. The indicated allowability of claims 3-5 is withdrawn in view of the newly discovered reference(s) to Schlangen USPN 5618282. Rejections based on the newly cited reference(s) follow.

Response to Arguments

2. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-12 and 14-20 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to

consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

5. Claim 1-6, and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Johnson USPN 4595392 in view of Schlangen USPN 5618282.

As to claims 1, 3, 4, 8, 14, and 16, Johnson discloses an interlabial pad having a water-permeable surface side sheet 7, an absorbent body 6, and a back side sheet 8. The interlabial pad comprises a cylindrical portion 3 in which a finger can be inserted for use (Figure 3), wherein the cylindrical portion 3 comprises the sheets 7 and 8 and absorbent body 6 (Figure 3). Regarding the limitation of a low resistance material, this is a relative term and the examiner considers the materials of Johnson to be low resistance as compared to an abrasive material.

However, Johnson does not disclose fine changes on its surface on the side opposite the body side. Schlangen discloses an interlabial pad having a baffle 24 with an embossed surface, which is micro-embossed to provide softness and render the material compliant to conform to the contours of the human anatomy (col. 4, lines 17-24). One having ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to modify the baffle of Johnson with micro-embossing to aid in compliancy and softness as taught by Schlangen.

As to claim 2, the limitations of absorbing vaginal discharge is directed to an intended use of the article. "Intended use must result in a structural difference between the claimed invention and the prior art in order to patentably distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art. See *In re Casey*, 152 USPQ 235 (CCPA 1967) and *In re*

Otto, 136 USPQ 458, 459 (CCPA 1963).” If the prior art structure is capable of performing the intended use, then it meets the claim limitations.

As to claim 5, Johnson/Schlangen is silent as to the emboss rate. However, the embossed rate would have been obvious by optimizing the amount of embossing on the nonwoven, and the softness, compliancy, and vapor permeability could be optimized by one of ordinary skill in the art for the same reason. Discovering optimum values only involves routine skill in the art, *In re Boesch*, 617 F. 3d 272, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA 1980).

As to claims 6 and 15, Johnson/Schlangen discloses a fiber assembly, Johnson col. 2, lines 31-36.

As to claim 7, Johnson/Schlangen does not specifically disclose a nonwoven fabric. However, Johnson discloses the absorbent material and wrap can be any suitable materials for this purpose. It is old and well known in the art to use nonwovens in absorbent articles for the purpose of absorbing exudates.

As to claims 10 and 18, the interlabial pad of Johnson/Schlangen comprises a mini sheet 6 (Johnson Figure 2).

As to claims 11, 12, 19, and 20, the limitations of absorbing vaginal discharge is directed to an intended use of the article. “Intended use must result in a structural

Art Unit: 3761

difference between the claimed invention and the prior art in order to patentably distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art. See *In re Casey*, 152 USPQ 235 (CCPA 1967) and *In re Otto*, 136 USPQ 458, 459 (CCPA 1963).” If the prior art structure is capable of performing the intended use, then it meets the claim limitations.

6. Claim 9 and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Johnson USPN 4595392 in view of Schlangen USPN 5618282 and further in view of Wray et al. USPN 6332878. Johnson discloses the present invention substantially as claimed. However, Johnson does not disclose a lubricant. Wray discloses an interlabial pad having a lubricant for the benefit of assisting in positioning (col. 2, lines 46-50). It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art to modify the invention of Johnson with a lubricant for the benefits taught in Wray.


Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jacqueline F. Stephens whose telephone number is (571) 272-4937. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 9:00-5:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tanya Zalukaeva can be reached on (571) 272-1115. The fax phone

Art Unit: 3761

number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


Jacqueline F Stephens
Examiner
Art Unit 3761

JACQUELINE F. STEPHENS
PRIMARY EXAMINER

January 23, 2006